

had been remembered and strengthened the emphasis on home-making in London.

Each of the main chapters engages with discussions of a different analytical element of home: the spatial home, the temporal home, the material home, and the relational home. Beyond just a concrete physical location, it is clearly demonstrated through biographical narratives and personal accounts that for Cypriot refugees home is multi-faceted, encompassing a house, the village, the island, and often the new house in Britain. Also, refugeeness should not always imply a previous condition of sedentariness. Some Turkish Cypriots had already been displaced and forced to live in enclaves in Cyprus since the 1950s and 1960s. Others had become internal migrants from rural areas to towns and cities long before becoming refugees. Such mobilities make the notion and experience of home far more complex. Beyond spatial accounts of belonging, longing for home also involves longing for a time before loss. One of the most powerful parts of the book describes how Cypriots who visited their places after thirty years realized that even if return to the physical space would ever be possible, a return to a past life as articulated through nostalgic recollections had been lost forever. However, refugees try to make and remake home in their new situations, and chapter 4 illustrates the role of materiality and the senses in how refugees remember and construct a Cypriot home in London through food, gardening, smells, and tastes. Of course, on top of its spatial, temporal, and material elements, home is about social relationships and networks. Refugees have managed to rebuild lost networks and relationships through community associations, cultural centres, and political organizations in London. Others, however, have chosen a looser connection to Cypriot community life and developed alternative types of social and cultural capital. After all, as Taylor discusses, as much as community can be a locus of belonging and reconstructing home “away from home,” it can also be hierarchical, internally divided, and exclusive. Although many refugees long for relationships and social networks that were disrupted when they left Cyprus, London has become

their new relational home where many have now established families with children and grandchildren, friendships and social circles. In a complex turn of events, returning to Cyprus would now jeopardize this relational home and lead to further loss.

Given that the refugee narratives are one of the strongest and most illuminating aspects of the book, there could have been further explanation of how and why these particular research participants were selected. The book includes a useful appendix with a list of the protagonists’ short biographies; however, some of this information could have been integrated more into the text to help contextualize the different “voices” even more constructively and allow the reader to follow life trajectories as well as social connections. Also, the “refugee issue” in Cyprus has been a highly political and politicized topic. It has occupied a central place in state rhetoric and agendas on both sides of the island and has formed a strong negotiating point in the peace talks on the reunification of Cyprus, especially around the themes of return of the refugees and their property. Taylor raises such issues in parts of the book, but a more developed discussion on the history of refugee politics, policies, and rights in Cyprus would have brought to the foreground analyses of economic and property loss that evidently play a role in refugees’ pragmatic strategies and pleas for rights and justice. In spite of a few such missed opportunities, Taylor’s book bridges a considerable gap in the field of Cyprus studies and offers an important case study to the literature on home and belonging. It tells powerfully a painful but at the same time heartwarming story of refugees’ resilience—not in the often-used sense of the term as individualized coping strategies and success, but as an ultimately social mode of (re)building relationships and home.

---

*Evropi Chatzipanagiotidou is a lecturer in anthropology at the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy, and Politics, Queen’s University Belfast, UK. The author may be contacted at e.chatzipanagiotidou@qub.ac.uk.*

### *Contesting Immigration Policy in Court: Legal Activism and Its Radiating Effects in the United States and France*



Leila Kavar

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 232 pp.

**L**eila Kavar’s book is an innovative extension of Bruno Latour’s method of studying how scientists make knowledge in laboratories to how lawyers create law

through daily practice. She argues that legal contestation reshapes how power arrangements affect the law and policy-making, which in turn has radiating effects. Put differently,

activism at one moment and in particular institutional domains sets legal precedent and frames subsequent activism in multiple domains. In contrast to other studies of the dynamics of immigration policymaking that focus primarily on “the coercive power of official rules and remedies” (5), *Contesting Immigration Policy* narrates the ability of legal rights activism to make and remake social relations.

Methodologically, Kawar’s exploration of the cultural life of law relies on a comparison of legal activism in France and the United States after 1970. The author selects the two country cases because they are both immigrant-receiving countries with long-standing contentious politics surrounding immigration and where immigration legal activism developed at about the same time. “Legal activism” refers to practices that explicitly aim to influence official law (see 20). A dialogic, comparative strategy reveals differences as well as “unexpected similarities” and de-centres the U.S. experience. The comparative approach, the author argues, allows her to build theory not through hypothesis testing but by “identifying particular assemblages of actors and activities in one setting and then examining the extent to which those assemblages can profile insights into our understanding of other settings” (15). Concretely, the study results from sixty in-depth interviews with key informants, substantial participant observation, and an analysis of archival sources.

*Contesting Immigration Policy* consists of an introduction and six chapters arranged to show points and counterpoints between France and the United States on legal practices. The introduction identifies shortcomings in previous attempts to understand the constitution of law, Kawar’s alternative approach and related argument referenced earlier, and a discussion of the benefits of adopting a Latourian approach. Chapter 2 traces the historical emergence of “immigrant legal rights activism” in France and the United States among progressive lawyers and grassroots immigrant social movements. Chapter 3 focuses on key cases that brought attention to rights activism in each national context. It examines how political mobilizations around litigation campaigns of the 1970s assisted immigrants and set legal precedents, which framed subsequent activism (radiating effects). Chapter 4 examines the role of litigators and how the contestation of policies generated a shift in how jurists approached their professional projects. Chapters 5 and 6 study how the institutionalization of legal activism patterned the dispositions of national administrative officials who were objects of lawyers’ activism. The study’s conclusion offers a useful restatement of findings as well as arguments and implications for

socio-cultural research about law and for the politics of reform.

The application of perspectives and methods from the sociology of knowledge stands out among the many strengths of this meticulously researched and thoughtfully written book. Kawar advances our understanding of what happens inside the “blackbox of law” by taking up Latour’s invitation to examine how jurists create law, much as how experimental scientists do science and thus constitute their profession (see the very useful methodological aside in Box 1, on 11). Her analysis makes the crucial move beyond the claim that law is socially made to showing how it is made. The result is a granular and illuminating depiction of how lawyers and organizations practise and constitute law. Scholars of immigration and asylum law will appreciate how Kawar puts into relief processes that are often opaque and infuriating to both practitioners and researchers. In addition, she offers a generative discussion of implications: a call for creative, technical innovation in immigrant-related lawyering, a rethinking of immigrant vs. immigration lawyering so as to foster alliances across groups separated by legal status, and an examination of transnational systemic harms to people out of legal status.

The approach and argument of *Contesting Immigration Policy* raise a number of questions. To what extent are its findings limited by the selection of countries that share a Western understanding of law and strong legal institutions? What are the prospects of applying the Latourian analysis to national contexts in which lawyers and courts have not been as influential as in France and in the United States or where borders do not neatly circumscribe political and legal jurisdictions? These questions probe the comparative limits and transportability of the findings of this work.

A reader’s ability to raise such questions, however, attests to the strength of Kawar’s exhaustively researched and methodologically innovative book. In my view, this book will set the course for future studies of how people and organizations make law. I highly recommend *Contesting Immigration Policy* for scholars of law and society, immigration and refugee policy, and anyone interested in unpacking the black box of formal law.

---

*David Cook-Martín is professor of sociology at the Institute for Global Engagement, Grinnell College. The author may be contacted at [cookd@grinnell.edu](mailto:cookd@grinnell.edu).*